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The Society of American Archivists

SAA Newsletter

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The Puzzle Palace: Archives and National Security

In addition to the intelligence operations of the better-known CIA and FBI, successive American presidents and their administrations have relied on the National Security Agency, established by Harry Truman in 1952. NSA was created not by law but by a top secret presidential memorandum addressed to the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. One of NSA's principal tasks is keeping secure codes for U.S. use and deciphering communications of foreign governments.

The first book-length study of NSA, James Bamford's *The Puzzle Palace*, was published in 1982. The author, an investigative writer, cited research at the National Archives in accessioned records of the Departments of State, Defense, and Justice, and in NSA records released by the Agency after Freedom of Information Act requests. Additionally, Bamford cited the papers of William F. Friedman and General Marshall S. Carter, held by the George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia.

Friedman, who died over a decade ago, was head of NSA's Code and Cipher Section. General Carter was director of NSA, 1965-69, and is now president of the Marshall Library's governing board, the Marshall Foundation.

In early 1983, NSA officials visited the Marshall Library as "part of our continuing review of research materials used by author James Bamford," according to General Lincoln Faurer, NSA director. Based on this review, Friedman materials which already had been used by Bamford were ordered closed to public access by NSA. The Carter papers used in the book had been withdrawn from public use at Carter's request after the publication of *The Puzzle Palace*, according to Bamford.

Research by the *SAA Newsletter* determined that NSA had reviewed the papers of Friedman at least twice prior to Bamford's access to them. Selected Friedman materials had been closed by the Library during one of those reviews, in accordance with NSA's orders.

The Marshall Library has a long history of close cooperation with NSA. It exhibits museum items on loan from the Agency. Fred C. Hadsel, director of The George C. Marshall Research Foundation, told the *New York Times* that the foundation's relationship with the government "is not and should not be

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1983 Election Results

Andrea Hinding, University of Minnesota, was elected vice president of SAA in the 1983 elections. She will become president at the 1984 annual meeting in Washington, DC. Hinding is an SAA Fellow, a former Council member, and editor of *Women's History Sources: A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts Collections in the United States*.

Three new Council members were elected. Because 1983-84 is the year of transition from an eight-member Council to one with nine members, newly elected Council members will serve terms of differing lengths. Elected to a three-year term was Linda Henry, American Psychiatric Association. John Fleckner, Smithsonian Institution was elected to a two-year term, and Kenneth Duckett, University of Oregon, was elected to a one-year term.

Mary Jo Pugh, University of Michigan, Anne Diffendal, Nebraska State Historical Society, and Diana Lachatanere, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, were elected to the 1984 Nominating Committee. Diffendal has been named to chair the group. SAA Members are invited to suggest candidates for vice president, Council, and Nominating Committee in the 1984 elections. Those suggestions should be sent to Anne Diffendal, Nebraska State Historical Society, 1500 "R" Street, Lincoln, NE 68508. The Committee also encourages participants in the 1983 annual meeting to bring names of suggested candidates to the Nominating Committee Open House, Thursday, October 6, from 11:15 am-12:15 pm.

The Puzzle Palace, cont.

an adversarial relationship," and added: "Collections come from different people and under different circumstances and different conditions. We are trying, step by step, to move toward an equitable opening of all our collections."

Some scholars suggested that the removal of the Friedman papers seemed pointless because the material had been published in the Bamford volume. The author claims to have copies of all the Friedman letters he used and states his willingness to make them available to anyone who wishes to see them.

An official of NSA told SAA that the Agency does not intend to take action against Bamford or to close materials he used at other locations.

And what of the original directive which established NSA? According to Bamford, "Thirty years later Mr. Truman's memorandum is still one of Washington's most closely guarded secrets. Those seven pages remain 'the foundation upon which all past and current communications intelligence activities of the United States government are based,' according to a senior official of the National Security Council. And in its defense against a 1976 lawsuit seeking access to the memorandum, the NSA argued successfully against the release of even one word: 'This memorandum remains the principal charter of the National Security Agency and is the basis of a number of other classified documents governing the conduct of communications intelligence activities and operations, functions and activities of the National Security Agency.'"

Several notes of particular interest to archivists emerge from the incident:

**The federal government has the legal authority to classify "private" papers in a private library if the material contains national security information.

**The Reagan Administration's 1982 Executive Order 12356 (see *SAA Newsletter*, May 1982, p. 1) on classification gives federal agencies the authority to reclassify material which has once been released if the material is still considered sensitive and can "reasonably be recovered."

**NARS experts stand ready to assist archivists whose holdings include material which may contain national security information. Copies of such papers should be furnished through the mail for evaluation. For more information and/or for the mailing instructions, contact Edwin A. Thompson or Jo Ann Williamson, Records Declassification Division, Room 18W, NARS, Washington, DC 20408, (202) 523-3165. If a private repository's collections contain material which is classified, arrangements may be made for appropriate storage and administration on site, as is the case at the Marshall Library. If appropriate on-site arrangements are not possible, temporary storage can be arranged in a federal repository.

Committee to Study Public Records

Sponsored by the Council on Library Resources (CLR), the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Social Science Research Council, the Committee on Public Records will begin work on July 1. The committee will study the records of government, with emphasis on such matters as the expectations of users both in government and out, the impact of technology on both record generation and archival operations, and the possible links among public archives. Ernest R. May of Harvard will chair the committee and Anna K. Nelson, George Washington University, has been named staff director. May served on the National Study Commission on the Records and Documents of Public Officials and Nelson was a member of the Commission's staff.

This 18-month study is being funded by the Mellon, Sloan, and Rockefeller foundations, as well as by CLR. The final report should be issued in January, 1985.

The committee will oversee the work of several task forces, each looking at a different issue relating to public records. Task force members and assignments will also be announced in early fall. Asked what the involvement of archivists will be in the work of the committee, Nelson replied: "Archival participation will be absolutely essential to the success of the study. Archivists will be called upon to participate as consultants, in the task forces, and in the work of the staff."

Information Management Report

A document entitled *Managing Federal Information Resources* was issued by the Office of Management and Budget in April 1983. It is the second annual report under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 and indicates, according to OMB Director David Stockman, "excellent progress in furthering the Act's important policies of improved information management within the Federal Government." A review of the report's contents discloses that the National Archives and Records Service plays no role in the activities which are chronicled. Indeed, NARS is not mentioned once in the entire 48-page coverage of information management activities.

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